CONFERENCE CALL DEFENSE DEPARTMENT BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH

LIEUTENANT
COLONEL DAVID KILCULLEN, SENIOR COUNTERINSURGENCY ADVISOR, MUTLINATIONAL
FORCE-IRAQ, UNDER GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS

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LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Okay. Thanks, Tim.

Well, listen, first of all, thank you all for joining. What I thought I might do is just throw out a few ideas to start with in the next few minutes and then just kind of throw it open and see what you guys want to develop and which issues interest you the

most. And what I wanted to focus on is how we diagnose the current security situation in Iraq, and then how the various components of our counterinsurgency approach are designed to address it.

And the first thing, I guess, to note is that when I say "our" approach, I mean coalition and Iraqi forces working together. Whenever I say "we" or "us," I'm talking about Americans and Iraqis working in a completely integrated fashion, including by civil and military organizations.

Secondly, what I principally want to focus on is the military side of the operation and principally here in Baghdad. But, of course, as you very well know, there's another whole civilian dimension to counterinsurgency, and there's another whole fight that's going on in the Baghdad belts. There's also some positive developments happening in Anbar, so you may want to talk about those when go over to Q&A. But let me just initially set the scene by talking about the current military situation here in Baghdad.

So first of all, our diagnosis of the problem is that during the last 12 months or during the calendar year of 2006, a vicious circle of sectarian violence was what did most of the damage to Iraq. It undermined security and it killed, you know, many thousands of innocent Iraqis. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the very fabric of Iraqi society was torn as a result of that. So that is in fact the main issue that we need to address now, in terms of stabilizing the situation, so that we can move forward.

And here's our diagnosis of how that circle works. Sort of the first stage of it was that extremists, particularly those linked to AQIs, as we call it, al Qaeda in Iraq, would infiltrate largely Sunni communities, and they would establish base areas through intimidation. They don't generally have actually a high degree of support from the population. What they do is they intimidate people and create a space, if you like, a pool of fear over the community that then allows them to work safely, and they can plan and prepare attacks using those intimidated areas as bases.

A second stage is that, having established a base here, they mount attacks on neighboring Shi'a communities, and they often target markets, parks and public places using suicide-bombers or car bombs and obviously killing a lot of Shi'a innocent civilians in the process.

The third stage, of course, is that that provokes a response, and the Shi'a militias and vigilante groups come back and attack their Sunni neighbors in retaliation. Now, of course, they're actually not really retaliating against the guilty party, the extremists just go to ground; but they conduct what we call extrajudicial killings, where they kidnap and kill innocent citizens or they conduct sectarian cleansing, if you like, where they drive innocent people out of their homes.

And in the final stages, those sectarian attacks polarize the community. They create tensions that make it very difficult to make progress on political reconciliation. And they further intimidate the Sunni communities, which tend to sort of close ranks in

the face of the external threat, and then that creates more space and opportunity for extremist intimidation. And so the cycle goes around and around.

Now, that cycle doesn't always start with al Qaeda, although, you know, provoking exactly this kind of sectarian violence is a long- standing element in their strategy. Sometimes it starts with Shi'a extremists, including the so-called secret cells of extremist terrorists who are linked to Jaish al-Mahdi. But in essence, that's the cycle that we identify that we has done so much damage to Iraq in the last 12 months.

There's also a number of what you might call accelerants in the process, which would be, you know, people or conditions that intensify the cycle and make it run faster and kill more people. And those would include AQI terrorists; members of other terrorist groups, particularly Ansar al-Sunna and some of the others; foreign fighters; infiltration or interference by neighboring countries, particularly Iran but not only Iran. And then crime and unemployment are also underlying conditions.

Now, you know, of course that's an oversimplification, and I've laid out an extremely oversimplified way of looking at it. There are many, many other causes of violence in Iraq. But we diagnose it -- this particular cycle that I've outlined was the main cause of the violence that did so much damage to Iraq in, let's say, the 12 months between the Samarra bombing in February 2006, which destroyed the Askariya shrine, and then the implementation of our new strategy in February 2007. So that's the main dynamic that we need to stop.

So having sort of diagnosed the problem, let me talk you through what we're trying to achieve with the strategy that we have in place now and how it's designed to break that cycle.

In essence, the first thing we want to do is we want to make it hard for extremists to infiltrate Sunni communities or to intimidate the population in them. That's the first stage of the cycle. So we deal with that by securing the population to emplacing what we call joint security stations, which obviously, as you know, include both a U.S. and an Iraqi presence. They include political and -- police, I should say, and military units, and they're often based on an Iraqi police station.

We're also trying to dominate the belts, which are the Sunni rural areas on Baghdad's outskirts, and we're trying to control access to Baghdad and make it harder for what we call the commuter insurgency to happen. Commuter insurgents are people who base themselves outside Baghdad City but they ride into the city on a sort of day-tripping basis.

Civil programs that are led by the Iraqi government and supported by our embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams also make a big difference in protecting communities and rendering them, if you like, resistant to infiltration.

So that's what we're trying to do to deal with the first stage of the cycle.

In the second stage, even the extremists do manage to infiltrate, we're trying to make it harder for them to attack the neighboring Shi'a communities, and we're doing this partly through gated communities, the so-called T-walls, which include access controls that mean that we know who's supposed to be in any part of the city at any given time and who's not supposed to be there. And they also include perimeter security, like barriers, walls and checkpoints, which means that there's only a limited number of controlled access points. And that means that even if the extremists do succeed in creating a base inside a Sunni community, it's much harder for them to sneak a car bomber or a suicide bomber out of there, and it's also much harder for that bomber to sneak into a neighboring district, because again that neighboring district will be protected as well.

We're also protecting communities by hardening them, what we call the living with terror program, where we're hardening markets, shops, public places -- parks, schools and so on -- and also by putting joint security stations into places that form a permanent presence to protect the population.

And to deal with the third part of the cycle, if tragically a terrorist attack still does get through, we try to deter any retaliation or any sectarian backlash, again, through the gated communities, which make it hard for death squads to target innocent Sunnis, because they can't get into the gated community where people live; and also, the JSSs, the joint security stations establish a permanent, 24/7 presence, which includes at nighttime, and most extrajudicial killings happen at nighttime in people's houses. So we're trying to protect people where they sleep to try and reduce that pattern of sectarian violence.

And then finally, all those measures reduce the feeling of intimidation and lift the fear off the various communities, which means that people feel more willing to give information to the police or the government about the extremists. And they're also able to avail themselves to various economic opportunities that we're putting in place. So as they cycle of violence is reduced, that also creates more space for political compromise and reconciliation.

And then finally, we conduct operations to support the rule of law, which helps us to deal with the accelerants that we spoke about. And we introduced what you might call decelerants, like political reconciliation and building competent, nonsectarian governance and national institutions that help slow down and reduce the intensity of the violence.

So let me stop there, and then throw it out for questions. But in essence, our diagnosis is we've got this vicious circle of infiltration and attack. And what we've tried to do is to put in place a series of blocks, if you like, that stop that circle from running, and if it does happen to run, reduce the effectiveness or the number of people who get killed by it. And that's the bottom -- the sort of underlying concept that underpins a lot of the details of day- to-day operations in Baghdad.

Tim, why don't we sort of throw it open.

TIM KILBRIDE (new media producer, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs): Okay, thank you, sir.

Okay, so, bloggers, the way we've been running this is the first to dial in is the order of the questions. So we'll start -- I'll read through the order. We've got Grimm (sp) from Black Five, followed by Austin Bay, followed by Streiff from Red State, Mark Finkelstein at NewsBusters, Jonathan Gurwitz, and then Michael Goldfarb. And I know we've had a few people join after that. Once we get past Michael Goldfarb, you can jump in as there's room.

And again, please remember to state your name and organization, and keep it to one question for now till -- see if we have time for follow-ups.

Q Certainly. This is Grimm (sp) from BackFive.Net. I wanted to ask more about the last point that you raised on the subject of rule of law and the status of the Iraqi judicial system, the court system, the police. When do we feel like it's going to be practical to start handing over people that we pick up to them primarily to be dealt with in the way that the U.S. Federal Marshals dealt with, for example, the Ku Klux Klan insurgents in the American reconstruction period.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Well, I think the various rule of law institutions in Iraq still have a fair way to go until they look like, you know, what we would consider normal in our society. But I think there's a degree of effectiveness that's there in those institutions that wasn't there, say, two or three years ago.

I think the big issue that we have right now is what happens to detainees when we take a guy off the street. We go through a whole series of processes to ensure that that person is not held for too long, and certainly not held if we don't have some evidence against them. What we'd like to be able to do is then hand that individual to a competent security organization where we know that, A, they're not going to be mistreated; but B, they're not going to appear on the street again within sort of two or three weeks and be back to creating violence. That's an area that I think we still have, you know, at least several months or years to go on.

And I guess as a general theme, I would say that I think on most of these issues we are going to get there, but it's not going to look like the United States when we do, and it probably won't happen in a time frame of months or even one year.

This is a multi-year activity that we're talking about.

Q Thank you.

MR. KILBRIDE: All right. Thank you.

Austin Bay?

Q Okay. Dr. Kilcullen, I was looking through your article in Iosphere. You talked about the need to exploit a single narrative. You said that to undercut influence, you have to have a narrative or some alternative to what the opposition -- what the terrorists, what the insurgents are proposing. And you said it might come from higher headquarters but you also had to be able to tailor the narrative to local conditions.

First of all, what is -- this is a two-part question. What is the single narrative in Iraq, if there is one, produced by the higher headquarters, or perhaps by the White House? And could you give us an example of how you would tailor that to, let's say, a specific neighborhood in Baghdad?

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Yeah, good question. I mean, I think that's one of the weaknesses of how we have done business over time. But again, I think it's something that's improving now. And the fundamental issue for us is making sure that the story that -- or the message that people are getting from Iraqi government institutions is the same as the message that they're getting from the United States.

One of our lessons that we've certainly found is that it's very, very difficult for Americans to generate a message that Iraqis find convincing. What we need to do is to work very closely with Iraqis to generate that message and then we're in a sort of supporting role.

So the message that the Iraqi government is currently putting out, as an example -- and there are a number of messages, but let me just draw one out -- is the idea that you don't need militias and terrorists to protect you, because the government can do that, and therefore you need to trust the government to protect you and you need to move away from dependency on militias and armed groups.

How you would tailor that to an area, the first thing that you do as an American commander is you sit down with your Iraqi counterpart and you talk through what it is that the population actually thinks is happening. And it's actually often very difficult to guess what that is. I mean, you actually have to know. You have to go out and ask people and find out what their views are on issues. And they're often things that would strike us as kind of hard to believe, but people do believe them.

So you need to sort of find out where the population is at. And then you work with your Iraqi counterpart to design messages that he feels are going to work.

And then the third thing that you do is you very carefully track how those messages are working and what you're doing to support them. So again taking your example, or taking the example that I gave you of, you know, you don't need the militia to support you, in some parts of Baghdad what we've done is we've made a big effort to recruit, train and deploy new police and to make a sort of visible presence on the street so people can see a change.

We told them that, you know, the police are here to protect them, and we make sure that we demonstrate that on a 24-hour basis so they can feel, you know, a change.

And then the U.S. forces in place are just working to support that message and preventing, if you like, sort of dissonant messages coming. And obviously, in the case of protecting the population, one of the biggest things that can undermine the credibility of that message is if, say, AQI succeeds in getting through and carrying out a large bombing. So you might end up where U.S. forces' primary contribution to that message is not actually delivering the message, it's creating a safe space in which the Iraqis can be credible when they deliver that message. So that's just one example.

But you sort of tend to work with the Iraqis, let them generate the idea, understand what the population really believes, and then you tailor a message to that and then you track very closely -- you know, almost continuously -- how that's developing.

Q But still, there's no single narrative for Iraq, then? Is that what you're saying, no strategic -

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I mean I'd say that we're still in the process of changing from one way of doing business to another. The single narrative that, you know, Americans used to pursue was this notion of "as we stand up, they'll stand down." And we found that that's, you know, actually not particularly comforting to Iraqis. The single biggest message that we are putting forward at this point from the headquarters level is we are protecting the population and we're trying to achieve sustainable stability. They're the two new components in what we're doing. And so pretty much everything that we do feeds into that single narrative of we're improving security and we're doing it to create a sustainable space where Iraqis can be responsible for their own security.

But I think how that plays out in different areas can be vastly different. You know, up in the tribal areas in Anbar, you know, it's all about tribal networks, and who they trust is the tribal leader, and it's about making sure people feel, you know, that they are safer and things are more stable. Down in Baghdad, sending that same message can involve completely different elements because people don't -- you know, it's all about neighborhood and government institutions.

MR. KILBRIDE: All right. Thank you.

Q Dr. Kilcullen, it's Mark Finkelstein of NewsBusters.

MR. BERGLING (?): Mark, if I could interrupt, Streiff from Redstate, you're next.

Q Oh, I'm sorry.

Q Hi. It's an honor to speak to you, Dr. Kilcullen. I'm Streiff from Redstate. I've got a question for you. It seems that in terms of accelerants, that cash is also an accelerant. I've done some recent reading of some summaries that indicate that, for instance, producing a car bomb runs into the tens of thousands of dollars, from procuring the vehicle, to the explosives, to paying people, et cetera, et cetera.

What are we doing to shut down the flow of cash, especially through the informal networks like the hawala systems?

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: The hawala system, yeah. Well, we have a whole series of financial controls that we are working on. I don't want to go into detail, because some of them are a little bit sensitive. But in sort of general terms, hawala isn't quite as prevalent in Iraq as you might think. It's actually very prevalent in Afghanistan, and we've been doing a lot of work over there to control terrorist access to the hawala network.

Here, I think the more important element in funding for these guys is actually black market activity. And, you know, all Iraqis who are trying to survive are involved at some level in the black market. I mean, there's nothing necessarily -- well, I mean it's not good, but it's not nefarious from a security point of view. But what we find is that some militias and extremist groups will skim profits off black market activity and then use those to support their activities.

As an example, right now in Sadr City, the JAM -- the Jaish al- Mahdi guys -- are selling propane fuel, which is what people use for cooking in Iraq. They sell a container of fuel for about eight times the official government price. They intimidate people who try and sell it at the normal price and drive them out of business and sometimes kill them. And then they sort of gain a monopoly of the sale of propane, and they sell that for this vastly inflated price to the local population, and they're, if you like, squeezing the money from the population, which they then use to put towards, you know, a variety of activities, but including terrorist activity.

On the Sunni side, it's a slightly different picture. Al Qaeda actually runs smuggling and various black market activities all the time, particularly up in the north and in the tribal areas of the country. And it's things like smuggling fuel across the border. Iraqi fuel is actually very cheap, and it's, in fact, cheaper than you can get it in many neighboring countries. So people tend to, you know -- al Qaeda will swipe a whole fuel truck and take it across the border and sell that, and that then makes enough money to run several operations. So it's almost kind of like a proceeds of crime situation where you've got sort of racketeering going on, and you have extortion, and a variety of smuggling and black market activities, and that then generates enough money to run a series of operations.

The things that we're doing to stop that, obviously creating security in these environments makes it much harder for people to intimidate or shake down the

population. And so in Baghdad, that's a big factor. Access control into and out of Baghdad City and in the wider, you know, areas of Iraq also makes a difference.

We're also putting in place, you know, financial controls, and we're working very closely with the Iraqi provincial and local governments and central government ministries to improve their governance and financial management performance, so that it's -- there isn't, you know, a lot of cash just floating around that's unaccounted for.

That's in fact one of the fundamental tasks right now of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. It's a bit of a misnomer to think that those guys are in the bricks-and-mortar trade of building stuff. That was probably true three years ago. What they're primarily doing now is training in capacity development for Iraqi ministries and governments and also civil society groups. And that all helps to kind of regulate the economy better and make it harder for people to skim that money off and use it.

So -- sorry. A lengthy answer. But it's a pretty complicated issue.

Q Thanks much.

MR. KILBRIDE: Thank you,.

All right. Mark Finkelstein, you're up.

Q Yes. Thank you. Mark Finkelstein from NewsBusters. Dr. Kilcullen, when this plan that you've described today was publicly announced not long ago, a wave of criticism appeared in the American media. The gist of it was, why, this is, you know, setting up barriers between Shi'as and Sunnis, and you know, we should really be bringing people together -- you know, that sort of argument.

First, could you respond to that? Second, did that criticism in any way affect the implementation of the plan? And third, have you started to see fruits that's coming from the implementation of the plan?

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Right. Well, yeah. I mean, I think some of you know that I occasionally blog at a website, and I posted a post there when this first came out, where I referred to what we're doing in terms of the barrier walls and the gated communities as being like a tourniquet in that it -- you know, it's something that you do when the patient's in danger of bleeding to death, okay? You don't do it just for the heck of it. And you apply that tourniquet for the minimum time possible, and you try and release it as soon as you can. Otherwise, it does damage.

So I think we're very concerned about the possibility that, you know, these kind of barrier controls could, you know, cement or exacerbate sectarian divisions. It's -- you know, it's -- that's in the forefront of their minds and something that we are concerned about.

The thing is, you know, 130 bodies are turning up a day in Baghdad due to sectarian violence last year. Now it's down to 20. In some districts, you know, it's even lower. So the negative effect of imposing this barrier, I think, is outweighed by the negative effect of lots of people getting killed. So it's kind of, you know -- (inaudible) -- we had to go with the lesser of two evils.

In terms of the criticisms that were made, some of them just were based, I think, on an inaccurate understanding of what we were doing. Firstly these things are quite temporary, and they can be removed relatively easily. You need basically just a pickup truck to move them.

So it's quite easy to open or close a barrier, and it's more like a temporary structure than you might thing. It's not sort of like the Berlin Wall. It's really just like a jersey barrier on a highway that gets created to control traffic flow.

Secondly there was this idea that it was sort of like a ghetto, that we were walling up Sunni communities and so on. But it wasn't like that, because we were in there with them, okay? It wasn't as if we were creating this kind of, you know, ungoverned space where it's like "Lord of the Flies" in there, you know, and then they just do what they want.

What we do is, we move into an area. We establish security, then we work with the community to decide where the gated community should go. And then we in-place the barriers after consulting with the Iraqi military and police, but also the local community. And it follows the area that they're comfortable with, and we have an American and Iraqi unit inside there with them. So it's not like they're sort of shut up inside.

And I know, you know, some people also had concerns about, you know, that it looked a bit like Northern Ireland and so on. I think that, you know, actually that's quite a perceptive observation. Because one of the things that we were consciously aware of was the program towards the end of the '80s in Northern Ireland, which was known as the Community Stabilization Program, which worked on that very, very similar basis. It tried to reduce the bloodshed on the boundaries or the faultlines between sectarian groups.

And the notion was, yeah, it's not very pleasant having a brick wall down one side of your street, but it's better than having your family killed. And over time as that -- those casualties go, you recede further into the past. People improve in terms of their relationships. So that's kind of what we've done here, although we've tried to make it more temporary than it was in Northern Ireland by being able to move the barriers.

Has it produced results? Frankly I think we had a bit of a honeymoon period when we started, and we saw a very, very large drop in sectarian killings, more than, you know, 50 percent in some places.

And overall, there was a very significant drop in Baghdad. I think it's come back up again. That sort of honeymoon period is over, and we're now into a long, hard slog of making it work. But it's still at a level that's substantially lower than it was last year when all this violence was being done.

So I calculate, just a sort of personal calculation, that given the (loss rates ?) last year and the fact that we've been doing this now for about five months, we've probably saved about 5,000 to 8,000 Iraqi lives just in Baghdad city, and you know, that matters, even if you, you know, don't sort of see a huge amount of reporting, but it is -- it's a real achievement that I think we can be proud of.

Q Thank you, sir. And could you mention, where do you blog, by the way?

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Sorry? On the Small Wars Journal, which is actually not really a blog, it's a community of interest in small wars and insurgency. It's www.smallwarsjournal -- all one word -- .com.

Q Thank you.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Sure.

MR. KILBRIDE: Dr. Kilcullen, I do want to want to ask you, sir, we're rapidly running out of time here. I don't know your schedule over there. If --

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: I have time if you guys want to keep going.

MR. KILBRIDE: (Inaudible) -- to take and just two questions from Jonathan Gurwitz and Michael Goldfarb and have to cut it off after that.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Sure.

MR. KILBRIDE: Jonathan, if you want to go ahead.

Q Jonathan Gurwitz, San Antonio Express News. Dr. Kilcullen, I'd like for you to elaborate on one of the accelerants on Iran. We understand the connection between the Iranian regime and the Shi'a extremist groups, but what's perplexing to many of us is the dynamics of the relationship between Iran and the Sunni extremists. General Caldwell talked about this again this morning, and I was wondering if you could talk about the dynamics of that relationship and what its impact is on the political process.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Sure.

Well, I think it's really important to understand as a sort of first thought that the groups that are fighting in Iraq mostly are fighting for political advantage, and in fact, if you look at the different groups that are fighting, some of them appear to be very different religiously. You know, there are what look like far right Sunni groups and what

look like extremist Shi'a groups, but actually you often find people that know each other in those groups and they sometimes cooperate on a tactical basis.

And if you think about it as purely a religious phenomenon, that's confusing. I mean, why would extremist Shi'a, you know, cooperate with extreme Sunni? But the thing is, you've got to remember that every Iraqi has at least two identities. They've got a pre-2003 identity from when before we arrived, and then they've got their current, you know, identity under the environment that we're in now. And so a lot of these people know each other from Saddam days, and they do tend to act like an old oligarchy that's trying to preserve their interests. And you often find Shi'a and Sunni groups sort of tactically cooperating in some ways or leaders in different groups knowing each other. So first of all, it's not quite as sharp a dichotomy between Sunni and Shi'a as you might think.

The second point is, Iran has a history of this, and there's a current pattern of Iranian behavior both in Afghanistan, where they're supporting the Taliban who used to be their enemies, and in Iraq, where they're supporting both Sunni and Shi'a groups in different ways. And essentially what they're trying to do is to bog us down. Their strategy is to, you know, soak us up, make it hard for us to maneuver, get us, if you like, decisively committed here in Iraq and over in Afghanistan to sort of achieve freedom of maneuver for themselves. So it's an Iranian national self-interest that's involved here more than some kind of religious dynamic. If you see the Iranians as fundamentally Shi'a, you get the wrong answer.

They are here. But what motivates their activity I think a lot of the time is sheer politics; it's Iranian influence and Iranian -- if you like, Persian interests. And so a lot of these guys who work with the Iranians may think that they are, you know, working on behalf of their faith, but they're actually essentially Persian stooges, is how I would put it.

And I think in the case of the Sunnis, it's more of a tactical alliance. It's convenience, where the Iranians believe there's benefits, and various Sunni leaders who know them or have contacts will exploit that and, you know, why wouldn't you, if someone's offering to give you assistance.

MR. KILBRIDE: Thank you.

And Michael Goldfarb you get the last question.

Q Thank you very much. Dr. Kilcullen, I have a quick question for you about the role of the airpower in the counterinsurgency as it's being waged now. My sense is that the Air Force feels a bit marginalized -- maybe I'm wrong in that. But if you could speak a little bit to how you're using airpower and what the effect is.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Sure. Well, I mean, airpower is actually critical in counterinsurgency. And I know that some -- there's a bit of a fight going on right now

between -- what is it, Army and Marines who wrote the Field Manual 3-24, and the Air Force is kind of out there writing an alternative manual at this point.

There's actually been a lot of really good work done on this in Rand. The guy that I think is best qualified to talk about this is a guy called Alan Vick at Rand, who's been really a pioneer in thinking about working through airpower issues and counterinsurgency.

So I'm aware there's this debate going on.

I think here in Iraq there are a number of sort of airpower writ large functions. Air reconnaissance, very important. Aerial surveillance, both by manned and unmanned vehicles is critical; it gives us, if you like, an unblinking eye that allows us to understand what's going on in the environment. The use of, you know, fast air combat power for interdiction and strike is important. It's more important in desert areas and underpopulated rural areas than it is in clotted, you know, sort of target-rich environments like in cities, where you can really do a lot of damage to the civilian population. So we don't tend to use airpower heavily inside cities.

Having said that, if we do need to, we certainly do draw on that capability, and we do tend to use sort of cannon and direct, you know, strafing-type activity rather than necessarily going straight for the kill box approach where you just deluge an area in high explosives.

I think the other really important function is transport and mobility. And obviously I'm defining airpower broadly here but, you know, helicopter mobility, the ability to move around in fixed-wing air transport aircraft really gives us an edge in terms of being able to react quickly when things happen.

So I think, you know, there isn't a lot of, you know, air-to-air combat in counterinsurgency, and I think therefore on the surface it kind of seems like, well, you know, what role does airpower have? But actually airpower has got a critical role in surveillance, transport, targeting of precise targets, interdicting or isolating areas of the battlefield. It's got a whole range of functions. And I'm kind of sad that it's been seen as a dichotomy between ground and air forces, because in fact neither of those is as effective by itself as it is when it works with the other. It's a real sort of symbiosis that you get from effective air and effective ground forces working together, and I think that's what we're actually doing here on the ground. That doesn't always look that way from the sort of doctrinal perch back in the States, but, you know, people work together on the ground to achieve a unified result.

Q Okay. Thank you, sir.

MR. KILBRIDE: We're going to have to cut off the Q and A there. I did want to ask Dr. Kilcullen if you have anything you want to say in closing.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Well, no, just really thank you for taking the time to talk to me, and, you know, we appreciate all you guys do to educate the public. And I think that's really the most important thing at this point is helping people understand to a certain degree, regardless of what their views of the war are -- but understand what's actually happening. Because often the hardest thing is to get a feel for, you know, what the ground truth is -- or the air truth, and, you know, put those things together. That creates a much more informed public debate, so thanks for everything that you're doing.

MR. KILBRIDE: Great. Thank you.

To wrap up, I want to say today's program is going to be available online at www.defendamerica.mil with audio file, print transcripts and Dr. Kilcullen's biography. The story will be written for American Forces Press Service and posted on the Department of Defense website at defenselink.mil. And if there are any questions about today's program, please contact DOD New Media at bloggeroutreach@hq.afis.osd.mil.

And again, thank you, Dr. Kilcullen and everyone who participated. Sir, I'm sure we'd be happy to have you back whenever you have time.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Yeah. Absolutely. And I know there's probably questions that didn't get asked, so sure.

MR. KILBRIDE: Thank you.

LT. COL. KILCULLEN: Thank you.

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